

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 ASMARA 00184 092043Z  
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00 PA-01  
USIA-06 PRS-01 SP-02 /038 W  
-----100606Z 091616 /21

R 090935Z MAR 77  
FM AMCONSUL ASMARA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4406  
AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA  
INFO AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM  
AMEMBASSY LONDON  
AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO  
AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
CINCUSNAVEUR LONDON  
COMNAVTELCOM WASHDC  
USCINCEUR VAHINGEN  
COMIDEASTFOR  
NAVCOMMUNIT ASMARA  
NAVCOMMSTA NEA MAKRI  
CNO WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L ASMARA 0184

E.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PINS ET  
SUBJECT: MASSAWA CONVOY BALKED

REF: ASMARA 0166 (DTG 011325Z FEB 77)

1. THE ASMARA-MASSAWA CONVOY BEGAN A ONCE WEEKLY SCHEDULE ON FEB 22, DEPARTING ON MONDAYS AND RETURNING ON TUESDAYS. THE DECREASE FROM THREE CONVOYS PER WEEK TO ONE IS REPORTEDLY THE OUTCOME OF AN AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EPMG SOLDIERS AND THEIR OFFICERS TO MINIMIZE THE EXPOSURE OF EPMG TROOPS TO ATTACK BY INSURGENTS. ANOTHER FACTOR IN THE DECLINE OF ACTIVITY ON THIS CONVOY ROUTE WAS THE CLOSURE OF MOST OF ASMARA'S INDUSTRIAL PLANTS IN EARLY FEBRUARY. AS NO IMPORTS OR RAW MATERIALS WERE BEING BROUGHT  
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PAGE 02 ASMARA 00184 092043Z

INTO THE CITY, LIKEWISE NO FINISHED PRODUCTS WERE BEING SENT OUT.

2. THE ONCE WEEKLY MASSAWA CONVOY SCHEDULE WAS IN EFFECT FOR ONLY TWO WEEKS AND NOW IT TOO HAS BEEN DISRUPTED. AS THIS IS THE ONLY REMAINING LAND LINK TO THE REST OF ETHIOPIA, THE FATE OF THIS CONVOY OPERATION IS VITAL TO THE CONTINUANCE OF EXISTING MILITARY AND ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS. THE REASON FOR THE FAILURE OF THE CONVOY

TO DEPART ON MARCH 7 APPEARS TO BE TWOFOLD. A RELIABLE SOURCE INDICATED THAT THROUGHOUT THE DAY ON MARCH 7, EPMG OFFICERS AND TROOPS WERE INVOLVED IN PROTRACTED MEETINGS. WHILE THE SUBJECT UNDER DISCUSSION IS NOT KNOWN, IT APPEARS THAT NO POLITICALLY AWARE SOLDIER WISHED TO BE ABSENT. THE OTHER REASON WAS AN INSURGENT ATTACK ON THE EPMG GARRISON AT MAI HABER, 8 KM FROM NEFASIT WHICH IS ON THE MASSAWA ROAD. WHILE NO RELIEF FORCES WERE DISPATCHED, EAF PLANES BOMBED IN THAT GENERAL AREA.

3. THE CONVOY FAILED TO DEPART ON MARCH 8, AND IT IS NOW BELIEVED IT WILL NOT DEPART AGAIN UNTIL NEXT WEEK. THE IMPACT OF DISRUPTION OF THESE CONVOYS FALLS FIRST ON COMMERCIAL AVIATION. AVGAS RESERVES HAVE NOT BEEN ADEQUATE FOR THE LAST SEVERAL MONTHS, AND WITHOUT REPLENISHMENT WILL BE DEPLETED WITHIN ONE WEEK. THE EAL MANAGER IN ASMARA CLAIMS THAT THEY HAVE FUEL FOR COMMERCIAL JET OPERATION TO LAST ONLY THROUGH MARCH 12. AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO THE USUAL PRACTICE OF OVERFLYING ASMARA WHEN SUCH SHORTAGES EXIST, THE MANAGER HAS SUGGESTED TO HIS HEAD OFFICE IN ADDIS THAT PLANES DEPARTING ADDIS TAKE ON THE MAXIMUM FUEL LOAD AT THE EXPENSE OF PASSENGERS AND FREIGHT. THE SAME PROCEDURE WOULD BE EMPLOYED ON SOUTHBOUND FLIGHTS THROUGH ASMARA. THE AVGAS SHORTAGE HAS ALREADY CAUSED CURTAILMENT OF DC-3 SERVICE TO KEREN AND THE WESTERN LOWLANDS. THE ADDIS-ASMARA "HISTORIC ROUTE" CONTINUES TO OPERATE BECAUSE THE DC-3S CAN REFUEL IN GONDER.

4. MOGAS SALES REMAIN SUSPENDED, EXCEPT FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVE SPECIAL PERMISSION FROM SECOND DIVISION G-5 TO PURCHASE MOGAS.  
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PAGE 03 ASMARA 00184 092043Z

KEROSENE IS AVAILABLE IN THE CITY, BUT IS SOLD ONLY INFREQUENTLY. UNDER THE RATIONING SYSTEM BUYERS CAN ONLY OBTAIN THREE LITERS PER WEEK WHICH CAUSES NEAR RIOTS AT SERVICE STATIONS WHICH OPEN UP FOR KEROSENE SALES. THE IMPACT OF DISRUPTION OR DELAY OF THE MASSAWA CONVOY IS MINIMAL ON EELPA. WITH THE BULK OF THE FACTORIES CLOSED, EELPA'S BELEZA POWER PLANT IS REPORTED TO HAVE MORE THAN ADEQUATE FUEL RESERVES.  
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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Decaption Note:**  
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**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
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**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 22 May 2009  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
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**Executive Order:** GS  
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**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** MASSAWA CONVOY BALKED  
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**Type:** TE  
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